

ANNUAL REPORT 89 - 90
MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
WILLIAM M. KUEHN, JR., DIRECTOR

Municipal Development Office

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The Municipal Development Office represents a broad scope of physical, socio-economic, and environmental planning endeavors aimed toward the enhancement of the quality of life of the City of Middletown and its citizens. It balances a complex agenda of development, housing, environmental and administrative issues through the twelve or more agencies and committees, which it staffs.

The following are highlights of activities of some of the major committee assignments:

1. Municipal Development Committee
2. Harbor Improvement Agency
3. Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency
4. Redevelopment Agency
5. Citizen's Advisory Committee
6. Urban Forestry Board
7. Middletown Housing Partnership

Municipal Development Committee - Nancy Conaway-Raczka, Chairman
Stephen T. Gionfriddo
Philip Halibozek

This standing committee of the Common Council deals with a variety of matters in its role as a clearinghouse for councilmanic action. To a lesser degree, the Committee serves as a development arm of the City. During the past fiscal year, the Committee dealt with the following issues:

- . In August, 1989, hosted a presentation from Project for Public Spaces, a consulting firm from New York City. After due consideration, the Committee recommended against pursuing the proposal in favor of the consultant study to the Redevelopment Agency which was just getting under way.
- . The Committee requested proposals for the adaptive reuse of the historic Danforth Pewter Shop located near the South Green. Several expressions of interest were received
- . Acknowledging higher and better use of the public parking area at Broad and Washington Streets, the Committee discussed long-range development potential with representatives from McCutcheon & Burr and Coughlin & Coughlin. Due to market conditions, redevelopment of that site is not now feasible.
- . The Committee prioritized projects to be undertaken by the Youth Conservation Corps during the summer of 1990. Major accomplishments included the clean-up of Riverview Cemetery, purchase and installation of 43 whiskey barrel planters along Main Street and water sealing the bleachers at Palmer Field.
- . During the year, the Committee recommended several expenditures from the Economic Development Fund for conservation/tree related activities.
- . The Committee recommended to the Common Council that Industry for Middletown (INFORM) be designated as the agent for the City in developing the North End Industrial Park.
- . The Committee recommended to the Common Council an expenditure of \$22,000 from the Economic Development Fund for the purpose of preparing a scale model of the downtown area. Ben Ledbetter, architect, began work early in the 1990-91 fiscal year.
- . The Committee supported the application of the Connecticut Central Railroad for State funding to reactivate the North End freight yard.

HARBOR IMPROVEMENT AGENCY- Edward J. Dzialo, Jr., Chairman
Thomas A. Chace
William Dillon
Michael Garafalo
Joseph Guida
Jane Hall
Joseph Meehl
Edgar Pratt

The Agency, in cooperation with other City departments, oversees and makes recommendations to the Common Council on all projects which impact the Riverfront. In the past year, the Agency has continued its work with the Army Corps of Engineers and DEP in the planning for streambank protection projects along River Road at Eastern Drive and at the wellfields; Wesleyan University on the design for the expansion of their boathouse; and, the Public Works Department and their Engineers in conjunction with plans to widen River Road and the Water & Sewer Department in conjunction with their plans to expand the capacity of the wellfield.

In addition, the Agency negotiated amendments to the grant from the Connecticut River Trust for improvements along the riverfront, and continued its pursuit for suitable sites for future development of riverfront amenities.

Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency - William H. von Mahland, Chairman
Janet Brooks
Fletcher H. Brown, Jr.
Joseph M. Carta
Robert Chamberlain
Harold Lawson
Peter Patton
Douglas Raineault
Clifton Seifert
Sheila Stoane
Paul Szewczyk

The Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency is responsible for the administration of Public Act 155 of the 1972 General Assembly, as amended.

That legislation requires controlling activities in regulated soils (wetlands) and along streams and rivers (watercourses). The Agency regularly meets on the first Wednesday of each month.

The last fiscal year saw a considerable amount of business come before the Agency, necessitating eighteen (18) meetings. During the course of the year, the Agency issued twenty (20) approvals, seven (7) denials, three (3) extensions to permits, and nine (9) determinations that proposed activities did not necessitate the securing of a permit. Additionally, the Agency conducted public hearings on twenty (20) proposals, not including mandatory hearing for cease and desist orders.

Three violations of inland wetland regulations required the issuance of cease and desist orders with resultant public hearings and in two (2) cases, corrective action. One case resulted in the involvement of the City Attorney's Office and the Superior Court.

The Agency, mindful of the necessity to periodically update its regulations, approved several amendments and one amendment to its bylaws.

As the Agency enters into a new fiscal year, it acknowledges new funding which will allow for the City to hire an Environmental Manager for placement of that position in the Water & Sewer Department. The Environmental Manager will be responsible for the administration of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses program along with several other environmental matters.

MIDDLETOWN REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY - Henry S. Novicki, Chairman

David Campanelli
Geraldine Duggan
Stephen Gionfriddo
William Howard
Thomas Hutton
Steven Leinwand
Vincent Loffredo
John Makrogianis
Theodore Raczka
Elizabeth Rak-Roberts
Donald Russell
Guy Russo
Louise Russo
Stephen Shapiro
Joseph Tine

The Middletown Redevelopment Agency exercises redevelopment powers authorized by the Connecticut General Statutes. During the 1989-90 fiscal year, the Agency's activities involved: monitoring progress on an undeveloped parcel in the Center Street Urban Renewal Project; the ongoing Middlesex Mutual Assurance Company Development Project; planning efforts for the North End Renewal Area; and, finally, planning efforts for the consolidated courthouse facility in Middletown. The following are highlights of the year's activities:

- . Concerning the Center Street Project, the Agency monitored the progress of development activities by owners of land on the southwest corner of Court Street and deKoven Drive for the construction of a 27,000 square foot office building. In November, 1989, the Agency approved a site plan for the parcel and in early 1990, recognizing its potential as one of the courthouse sites, granted a suspension of the schedule to permit the owners to pursue the consolidated courthouse facility with the State of Connecticut
- . Beginning in July, 1989, the Agency worked with its consultant, DeCarlo & Doll of Hamden, in long range planning of the North End Renewal Area. To facilitate that process, a Planning Subcommittee was created of the Redevelopment Agency, monthly reports were given to the Agency by the consultant and participation of the North End Task Force and the public was invited. On May 1, 1990, the DeCarlo & Doll report was delivered to the Agency. On May 29, 1990, a workshop was held for members of the Agency, the Common Council and the Chamber of Commerce.
- . With knowledge of the State's desire to build a new combined courthouse facility in downtown Middletown, the Redevelopment Agency and the Common Council amended the consultant's activities to consider a Government Center with a one block expansion of the project area. The Agency met with a subcommittee of the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust in a workshop session to consider siting and design issues. Meetings were also held with the potential courthouse developers as identified in early 1990. As part of the final North End Renewal Plan, DeCarlo & Doll recommended alternative sites for the courthouse facility.

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- . Upon a recommendation from its consultants, the Redevelopment Agency endorsed the creation of a North End Industrial Park of approximately 75 acres north of the Arrigoni Bridge. Following Common Council action, Industry for Middletown (INFORM) was designated as the lead agency for the City in pursuing the development project.
- . The Agency continued to monitor progress of the Middlesex Mutual Assurance Company Development Project and witnessed the completion of the twelve story office tower in November, 1989 and completion of the parking garage in April, 1990. A Certificate of Completion for those two buildings was issued on June 25, 1990. During the year, the Agency authorized continued negotiations with Mazzotta's Restaurant. In January, 1990, the Connecticut Bank & Trust Company advised the Agency that it would not be financially participating in the reconstruction of the County Lane area.
- . The Agency continued to receive status reports on Parcel E-2, located behind the YMCA, south of Union Street. Such reports were delivered by both the "Y" and Middlesex Memorial Hospital.
- . In the Fall of 1989, the Greater Middletown Preservation Trust sponsored several multi-day programs dealing with downtown design issues and organizing the downtown for action. Agency members, staff and DeCarlo & Doll participated in those sessions, leading to one of the major recommendations in the North End report of establishing a Design Review Board.
- . In January, 1990, staff filed with the Connecticut Department of Housing, an application for designation of a Housing Development Zone to be coterminous with the North End Renewal Area.

As the Agency entered the next fiscal year, it was with the intent to be implementing various elements of the North End renewal program, plus seeing to completion the Middlesex Mutual Assurance Company Development Project.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE - Loretta Cavanaugh, Chairman

Vincent Amato
Stephen Gadomski
Carmelo Guiliano
Idella Howell
George Keithan
Daphne Kilbourne
Richard Kreh
Douglas Kulmacz
Ann Loffredo
Donna Mitkowski
Michael Moroni
Will Oliver
William Pillarella
Stephen Shapiro

The Citizens Advisory Committee is organized to advise the Mayor and Common Council in matters concerning the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program as funded annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Middletown receives its annual funding notification from HUD in early Spring. Shortly thereafter, the Committee holds a public hearing which affords citizens the opportunity to comment on the proposed use of the funds. The projects which are funded are required to principally benefit individuals and families of low and moderate income. During the course of the 1989-1990 fiscal year, the following actions were taken:

- . Approved the creation of an Affordable Housing Fund in the amount of \$250,000.
- . Regularly monitored CDBG recipients for program compliance.
- . Recommended appropriation of monies from the Revolving Fund for Rental Rehabilitation Administration.
- . Approved certain amendments to past CDBG Entitlement allocations.
- . Recommended to the Common Council, the consolidation of various rehabilitation accounts, plus the appropriation of \$220,000 from the Revolving Fund to the Residential Rehabilitation Fund.
- . In April, 1990, conducted a public hearing on the annual CDBG Entitlement, plus reprogrammed funds, together totalling \$572,434 and made recommendations to the Common Council for allocating those funds.

URBAN FORESTRY BOARD - J. Stanley Watson, Chairman
Lewis B. Daniels
Mary Ann Dickinson
Juana M. Flagg
Hortense Kabel
Anthony S. Marino
Joseph C. Serra

The recently created Urban Forestry Board is the City agency which administers the State of Connecticut's Urban and Community Forest Pilot Project. Middletown, having been designated as the model community for this project, was charged by the state with the duties of:

- . creating and conducting a computerized inventory of the urban forest;
- . compiling and accepting a draft management plan for the care of the forest based on the information gathered in the inventory;
- . designing and passing a new Tree Ordinance which would enable the implementation of the Management Plan;
- . observing Arbor Day in a meaningful celebration;
- . and, in terms of publicity and public awareness, being subject to a documentary film process.

Part of Middletown's duties as the "Model Community" are to make its materials and processes available, in order to create educational tools for other communities wishing to embark on an Urban Forestry Program.

After consultation with the various different City Departments which dealt with trees, the Forestry Board developed a complex RFP to attract a qualified Arborist and Forester capable of conducting the computerized inventory, and developing the Management Plan. In September these duties were entrusted to Bruce Spaman of Timberline Land Management Company.

Concurrently, the Board set about to:

- . ascertain public opinion regarding trees and care of the Urban Forest;
- . study the City's current systems and tree management practices;
- . compile and distribute educational materials;
- . research the historical aspects of the "Forest City" tree programs;
- . develop the required Tree Ordinance;
- . involve the young people of the YCC Program in the initial phases of the inventory and improvement of Main Street planting sites.

At the same time, UCONN Extension Educator, Jeff Campbell and Fred Borman, Urban Forester from the DEP, began looking for both the best possible software for the program, and for samples of tree ordinances appropriate to Middletown and other Connecticut communities. Meanwhile, Statewide, 1990 was declared the "Year of the Forest" and April, 1990 designated "Urban Forestry Month".

Throughout the winter and spring, the Board continued to interact with other City Departments and Commissions, private sector groups, and individuals, dealing with issues both simple and complex including:

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- . Consideration of zoning and subdivision text amendments per requests from Planning & Zoning;
- . Enacting interim measures to protect public trees from unnecessary damage;
- . Addressing the issue of Christmas lights with the Chamber of Commerce;
- . Design and implementation of Arbor Day and Earth Day programs, plantings and proclamations;
- . Issuance of "Forest City" T-shirts to volunteer arborists and YCC crew.
- . Featuring the Middletown project at the 2nd annual Urban Forestry Conference, "The Forest on Main Street", held at Middlesex Mutual in June.

By the end of the fiscal year:

- . the inventory and preliminary summary reports had been delivered using software custom-designed for Middletown by Bruce Spaman;
- . the management plan was underway with delivery scheduled for Fall 1990;
- . the Ordinance was ready for Council consideration;
- . and, Public opinion survey fully designed.

Middletown Housing Partnership - Mayor Paul Gionfriddo, Chairman

Mary Barnes
James Dunn
Lisa Faccadio
Marvin Farbman
Stephen Gionfriddo
P. Thomas Gionfriddo
Leila Gonzalez-Sullivan
Richard Kreh
Vincent Loffredo
Linda Ozga
George Reif
William Roberts
John Robinson
Joseph Rumburger
William von Mahland

The Middletown Housing Partnership concentrated its efforts in 1989-90 in four particular areas:

- . Pursuit of Development Designation from the State Department of Housing.
- . Creation of the Affordable Housing Fund.
- . Coordination of condominium developers and private non-profit housing providers under the State CONDAP program; and
- . The acquisition of the Military Housing in Middletown for the purpose of providing affordable housing.

In its pursuit of Development Designation, and building upon the assessments of housing need, resources and zoning issues submitted to DOH in May 1989, the Partnership continued to respond to requests from the Department of Housing throughout the year. They considered support of several potential "qualifying projects", including creation of an Affordable Housing Fund, and supplied further materials on both resources and zoning. Considering Middletown's present housing stock, the Partnership also applied for Development Designation under the Balanced Inventory Waiver in May 1990, and continued to submit maps and plans as requested by DOH.

The Affordable Housing fund was initiated with a \$250,000 allocation of Community Development Block Grant Funds. The Partnership sought to match those funds with private and other public funds and to set up guidelines for their use based on similar projects in nearby communities. At least \$125,000 of the fund was earmarked for Downpayment Assistance for moderate income first-time home buyers; and the rest for housing opportunities for families of low income.

When the State of Connecticut came to the Partnership with their CONDAP program in January, the Partnership played a role as facilitator between condominium developers and several non-profit housing organizations. It set up tours and meetings and supported the applications of two of the groups.

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In April, the Partnership was alerted to the fact that the Army was disposing of its sixteen units of single-family housing on Military Road; that this disposition automatically triggered the McKinney Act requiring the housing to be used for the homeless; and that the military families would be displaced. The Partnership, on behalf of the City, took an active role in the acquisition of the housing for moderate income families including the Military families and people presently in subsidized housing who could afford to buy one of the military houses. Working with DOH, CHFA and the other Connecticut towns with similar housing, the Partnership sought the withdrawal of all the McKinney Act applications, and entered into negotiations with the Army directly. Zoning issues were addressed, houses inspected and land ownership options ranging from subdivision to condominiums to Land Trusts, explored.

In addition to the foregoing staff assignments, the Municipal Development Office also has worked with the Long River Village Task Force, the Shepherd Home Liaison Committee and the Vacant Buildings Study Committee.